



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW.

No. CCLXXXIV.

JULY, 1880.

PRINCE BISMARCK, AS A FRIEND OF AMERICA AND AS A STATESMAN.

PART I.

SINCE I have undertaken to present this great statesman to the American public in the following pages—the man on whom all eyes in Europe are fixed so soon as any change impends in the fortunes of the Continent, or when men's minds are agitated by some important question—I rejoice to be able to begin by declaring him to be the friend of America. Prince Bismarck is, indeed, an old and warm friend of the United States and of their inhabitants. When he still bore the title of count, and, indeed, when he was simply Herr von Bismarck, he was well-disposed toward this great North American people, a favorable disposition which dated from his youth, and may be said to have been inherent in his nature. In other words, the Chancellor of the German Empire in this trait forms no exception among the German people, and is, in fact, the type of his nation, and the representative of the great majority of Germans who look beyond their borders, and are able to understand the nature of foreign peoples, and to estimate them according to their worth.

We Germans, too, are in the habit of regarding the Americans as “kin beyond sea,” for which we have many good reasons, in some respects even more cogent, perhaps, than have Gladstone's coun-

trymen. The mighty nation in the north of the transatlantic continent is a mixed people, drawn from various races, of whom the great majority are Germanic. These may be subdivided into two stocks—the Anglo-Americans and the German-Americans—both akin to us—the former from ancient times through the Saxon blood which runs in their veins, and the latter as the immediate offspring of their German mother, many of whom still speak the home language. The Anglo-Americans, the dominant race in the United States, are our cousins, and the German-Americans, fewer in number, although amounting to three or four millions, are congregated in the chief cities on the Atlantic seaboard and in the West, and thus exercise considerable influence in the formation of the national character ; * these are, indeed, our own brethren, flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone.

The political life of America and much of its organization undoubtedly differ from what we find in Germany, but, side by side with important differences, there are, especially of late, in the recent institutions of both nations evident points of likeness, which would be still more apparent if each nation were not subject to the constraining power of necessity in their external circumstances, the relative position of the two countries, the character of their neighbors, etc., which have influenced the choice of their mode of government and the form of their institutions. It would not be difficult

* Dr. White, the representative of the United States at the Imperial Court of Berlin, on the late occasion of the opening of the International Fishery Exhibition, expressly declared and admitted the great benefits which the Americans have derived from Germany. He remarked that the chairman of the banquet, Oberbürgermeister von Forckenbeck, had spoken of the great services rendered to the exhibition by America, but that he must declare the Americans to be debtors to Germany. Every American was aware that Germany had rendered, and was still rendering, good service to America, both in a material and an intellectual point of view. Thousands of German laborers had crossed the sea, carrying with them their industrious habits, and there were now more than a thousand American students at the German universities and other places of education, who would see to it that the school system introduced into America from England should disappear. The Germans had brought their idealism with them, and had also distinguished themselves in the sphere of politics, of which the speaker gave an instance in Mr. Carl Schurz, who is a member of the Cabinet. Dr. White concluded his speech by saying that, "in the conflict against slavery and for a united country, the Germans had always fought for the good cause, as well as in the great controversy of political economy between a metallic and a paper currency. It would ever be a pleasure and an honor to the United States to take part with Germany in the promotion of industry and civilization." Great applause followed these words.

to adduce examples of what we have asserted. The German mode of government is a monarchy, while that of America is a republic. But the Americans as well as the Germans only brought the form of their constitution to perfection by a civil war which cemented the centrifugal elements. Not till quite recently did the Union become a perfect Federal state; and the German Empire, which has replaced the disintegrated German Bund, is a similar structure, although erected on the basis of monarchy: the Senate corresponds with the Bundesrath, the House of Representatives with the Reichstag, the President with the Emperor. The German Empire is a military state, because it is surrounded by other like states, and is menaced with war; America only requires a small army, since she has no rival and menacing neighbors; yet her legislation in this direction shows that at least it is a question whether she would continue to be a republic were she forced by circumstances to maintain a standing army corresponding to her greatness and to the number of her inhabitants.

However widely the Germans differ from the Americans in political institutions, this difference has never produced a feeling of dislike or ill will toward our near and remote kindred. Neither have we been prejudiced by the fact that the majority of Americans differ from us in their manners, mode of life, and social customs; and, indeed, I think I may affirm, on the strength of considerable and assured experience, that although they have, as far as race and language are concerned, more in common with our good friends in Great Britain, yet the hearts of the Americans are drawn toward us rather than toward those who are not only their brothers but their rivals.

We Germans can rejoice without grudging over the great qualities of the Americans: their realism, which is not without a touch of the ideal, and which does not exclude sacrifices to the latter; over their bold yet comprehensive views of public and private affairs; their spirit and persistence in overcoming difficulties. We concede to them without dissatisfaction or jealousy their vast resources and almost unbroken success, their continual progress toward a mighty future. On the other hand, we know that they are the only people which has not been filled with envy and groundless fears by our acquisitions in the late war, by our entrance into the circle of dominant European nations, and our position as a great and pacific power. Just as we, during the war between the Northern and Southern States, shared the hopes of the majority of Americans for the tri-

umph of the cause which was finally successful, so we counted on their sympathy with our national party when a few years later the question of our existence and the crisis of our fate approached. In 1870, when Mr. Bancroft's letter to the Chancellor of the Empire was published, in which he, as the representative of the United States, congratulated himself on having been an eye-witness of the triumphant success of our German policy, he was generally regarded as the interpreter of the sentiments of his countrymen, and the letter was hailed by the whole German press as a matter for congratulation.

From the time when America succeeded in severing her connection with the mother-country, a good understanding between the two nations has always subsisted, nor is there the least reason to suppose that it will not be permanent. It is well known that Frederick the Great was unconditionally on the side of the American colonies in their conflict with the mother-country, and in their attempts to form independent States; he openly rejoiced at their success in the presence of the English ambassador, and afterward entered into friendly relations with the States. These relations were maintained uninterrupted by the Prussian rulers who succeeded him, nor is there any change in our time.

Prince Bismarck's sentiments toward America are mainly those of the German people as a whole; so that it is enough to say that these sentiments may be further explained by the fact that the temper of the American people and that of our great regenerator have some qualities in common with each other, of which I need only mention here the daring and far-sighted policy, the bold and persistent triumph over all difficulties, and, above all, the realistic views and treatment of affairs observable in the entire conduct of them both.

A foreshadowing of this similarity of temper and of this partiality for America may, as I have already said, be traced in the undeveloped Bismarck, in the Göttingen student of 1833. John Lothrop Motley, the future historian and diplomatist, and another American student named Coffin, are mentioned among his friends at that time. With the latter especially he seems to have conversed on political matters. The question whether there would be a united Germany in the course of another twenty years became the subject of a wager. Coffin said "No," and Bismarck "Yes," and the winner was to receive five-and-twenty bottles of champagne, which they were to drink together. "When the time had elapsed," so Bismarck

told the story during our campaign in France, "I remembered our wager, and wished to cross the sea to conclude the affair, and drink the forfeit with him. But, on making inquiry, I found that he was dead. Poor friend ! his name was no good omen."

Bismarck retained his prepossession for Americans, on a more thorough acquaintance with history and geography, after he became a minister, and finally when he rose to be the leader of German policy. During the Franco-German war, generals of the United States army, accompanied by civilians, were often presented to him. Sheridan appeared at Port à Mousson with his aide-de-camp Forsyth, and his interpreter Mr. McLean ; at Ferrières there was Burnside, and another American, whose name I have forgotten ; and at Versailles some other American visitors, all of whom were welcomed and treated as distinguished guests. They were even admitted at times when he was full of work, and other visitors were sent away. "I do not know how these Americans have bewitched me," he said to me one evening at Versailles, "but I can not send them away, although I have so much to do that for me the day ought to have six hours over and above the four-and-twenty." Sheridan repeatedly dined with the Chancellor, and accompanied him to the battle-fields of Metz and Sedan. They seemed to be mutually interested and pleased with each other ; so much so that, when the American general had found shelter for the night in a peasant's hut at Rézonville, he was several times heard to murmur, "Dear Count !" in his sleep.

The Chancellor was also much pleased with Bancroft's letter, of which we have already spoken. It reached us at the Rothschild château at Ferrières just as we sat down to dinner, and after reading it he handed it to me, that I might translate it to such of our guests as did not understand English. During the siege of Paris, the Count was on more friendly terms with Washburne, American envoy to the French Government at that time, than with the other foreign representatives who remained in the city, and Washburne was of great use to those Germans who were left there. There was also a young American named Moulton, brother-in-law to Count Hatzfeld, one of the Chancellor's suite, who, if I remember right, had some property at or near Brie, and in whose sprightly, unaffected manner Bismarck seemed to find especial delight : he was always a welcome guest at dinner at Madame Jessé's house.

The Chancellor's good feeling for the Americans, which is apparent in these slight touches, was not changed when public opinion

in America inclined toward the French people after their sudden transformation into republicans, nor even when private persons in America supported the resistance of France by sending over arms and other materials of war. The war materials sent by the English were regarded with very different feelings, for in their case we beheld secret enmity, in the Americans only a mercantile spirit.

I must reluctantly pass over further proofs of Bismarck's attachment to America, which I regret the more, since they are highly characteristic of the Prince's tone of thought. Yet, before we turn to other considerations, it is worth while to mention the following fact: In the spring of 1873 I saw a framed portrait in the Chancellor's study, which was leaning against a chair until it should be hung up; and on coming close to it I recognized the features of President Grant. He was there in good company. Very few pictures adorned the walls of the room in which the Prince was working at the time, but they represented for the most part historical characters, and contemporaries of the highest repute; the Great Elector, Frederick the Great, the Emperor William, Victor Emanuel, and the *Schlachtendenker*, Moltke, looked down from their frames on those that entered the room.

Let us now consider the great Chancellor from another point of view, and inquire into the secret of his wonderful success. German dreamers, worthy people but not clear thinkers, have discovered that it is solely and altogether due to the popular spirit, the *Volksseele*. The whole scheme was devised and carried into execution by the *Volksseele* through popular agitation, directed by the sage judgment and the infallible counsels of professors, lawyers, and men of letters, who were its mouthpieces; through its associations and mass meetings, its Schützenfests, its Turnerfests, and its Sängerevents. Others have ascribed to chance and to a long run of good luck the events which have reconstituted Germany, and have raised her from a weak to a powerful state. Others, again, whenever he has come forward and carried into execution any grand scheme, have seen only the evidences of blindness, stupidity, or treachery among his opponents.

I am of quite another opinion, although I do not deny that a grain of truth may lie at the bottom of some of these explanations. These outgivings of the *Volksseele* were at best of secondary importance—mere sentiment and *velleité*, oftentimes not even helpful. And here we are reminded that at the very beginning of his political career Bismarck said to Disraeli, "I wish to save Germany

from the professors." What is called good luck is for the most part capacity and energy in making use of circumstances. Frederick the Great, indeed, paid homage to King Chance, yet those who quote this saying should remember that it is accompanied by the remark, "Qu'un homme d'esprit dise un mot, cela suffit pour que mille vous le répètent." The blind stupidity of hostile princes and statesmen has involuntarily contributed to the success of many of the Chancellor's schemes, but it was impossible for him to calculate on such aid beforehand. And the treachery which is supposed to have helped him is only a delusion of the French, who, on the collapse of their assumed invincibility became so excited that, with all their natural intelligence, they were like people who imagine that they see a ghost, and they were ready to believe the most wonderful inventions. It is a legend which may be repeated by the present generation of our neighbors on the other side of the Vosges, but which will find no place in history, even in France, and which we Germans may at once reject in our attempt to account for our success.

I have, therefore, only to regard our Chancellor and his acts in the light in which they would probably be considered by the gifted author of "Heroes and Hero-worship"—that is, I am convinced that Prince Bismarck has really made himself and Germany great by the surpassing keenness of his political insight and by the strong will which have done such great things for Germany. He is a product of the slow development of the German nation, which began with Frederick the Great, and was accelerated by the war of liberation; a development which, as time went on, was concentrated, with all its legitimate aspirations, on a single personality, and in this concentrated form its power was so gigantic as to overthrow the foundations of the old world, and to construct a new and fairer building out of its ruins. In other words, he appears to those who know him most intimately to be one of the men ordained by Providence, one of the great geniuses or heroes who appear from time to time to direct the energy of their people into new and higher paths, by which they may attain to fuller activity and recognition, and may thus become, when rightly estimated and used, a blessing to their neighbors and to the whole civilized world. The Chancellor Bismarck, already regarded by many in this his historical aspect, will, when party spirit has subsided, and there are more abundant materials for the interpretation of his character, be more generally recognized as such a God-sent hero, endowed with divine genius.

It is, therefore, in himself that I seek, and believe to have partly found, the solution of the riddle of his astonishing success. Only in part, for while we can analyze his political method as it is expressed in acts and words, his genius is incapable of definition, since it is full of surprises, ever working with new expedients and in new ways, ever devising unexpected combinations. Like everything informed with genius, it falls into the sphere of that creative force and impulse which a German philosopher has designated as the unconscious. He has this quality in common with Shakespeare and Goethe. We can enjoy, admire, and analyze their works, yet no one can enter so closely into what moves and inspires their hearts as to equal them. A man must be born a Goethe or Shakespeare of the spirit of poetry, just as a Bismarck is only born of the spirit of history.

If, now, we consider the working of this genius, which acts unconsciously in his inmost being, and which therefore is veiled to all scrutiny, we discover as it were the symptoms of this innermost process: an intellect that essentially, or, more properly speaking, that necessarily, naturally, and spontaneously aims only at what is attainable; a searching and penetrating insight into the means best fitted for reaching its ends; and a clear perception of the obstacles, whatever they may be, which might impede or arrest its progress toward its object. We find the same readiness in concession as in persistence, and a steady pursuit of the main lines of his enterprise through all the circumstances that occur. A nearer examination will show a delicate hand, never missing the right spot as it probes and handles all the personalities with which he has to do; the gift of always knowing the right moment at which to strike a decisive blow, or to defer action until the fitting hour arrives, and an extraordinary knack of insensibly leading his opponent to put himself in the wrong in the eyes of the world. We may also admire his singular impartiality with respect to liberal and conservative party warfare, his perfect readiness to accept facts, which, however, is accompanied by an attractive warmth and poetic illusion in his estimate of results; the great energy which shrinks from nothing which is expedient and necessary, and at the same time a moderation which only demands what is absolutely necessary, and is ready to sacrifice trifles in order to come to an understanding. He has worked with simple tools which have from their very simplicity been often overlooked and despised, and that not only once, like Columbus with his egg, but by combining in every great undertak-

ing a cool head with a warm heart, by uniting Achilles with Odysseus in his own single person. Many will agree with me that this is an approximate solution of the problem of that success by which this extraordinary genius has surprised the world.

The Chancellor acted with wonderful skill during the years preceding the war of 1866, and still more surprising perhaps were the clear-sightedness and dexterity with which he was able to restrain the French in their thirst for "revenge for Sadowa" until the right time for Germany arrived, and we were able to meet their attack with decisive success; he caused the Emperor Napoleon to compromise himself again and again in the eyes of Europe, and was able to conduct the war so as to secure the neutrality of the other powers. With masterly art he acquired the good will of Russia, and gained over the south German states by his forbearance; he induced Bavaria to undertake the task of restoring the imperial dignity, and in this way he crowned the edifice of the German Empire; he caused Alsace-Lorraine to be declared the joint possession of the German princes, so as to make its preservation the common interest of the empire, and thus forged a new bond to unite the north and south. He displayed his diplomatic talent as an "honorable broker" in his presidency of the Congress of Berlin; and finally when he accomplished the Austro-German alliance which, as he expressly declared, had been his object for years, and for which he had paved the way by skillful management.

But, in our opinion, the Chancellor's most brilliant act of statesmanship was that by which he first entered into the arena of foreign policy, and acquired Schleswig-Holstein for Germany. By the death of Frederick VII, the hereditary Prince of Augustenburg succeeded to the duchies to the north of the Elbe, in accordance with a title which was admitted by many adherents both in that country and in the rest of Germany, but which had been repudiated by Prussia and Austria in the London protocol. Public opinion in Germany called upon Prussia to withdraw from this compact, and to obtain the duchies for the Prince of Augustenburg. This appeared to be the best way of baffling the European coalition against Prussia which had been contemplated some months before, on the occasion of the Prusso-Russian convention held in Berlin, with the view of coercing the turbulent Poles. Bismarck's keen eye perceived this, and at the same time another way of attaining his object. He opened the campaign not against but for the London protocol. For Denmark had, contrary to her engagement, incorporated Schleswig with her-

self. The tone in which the Minister declared it to be "the dictate of honor and prudence to throw no suspicion on our good faith" plainly shows his meaning in abiding by the London protocol. The Prussian delegates were too dense to perceive it, looking at the matter in a narrow, short-sighted way, and clinging to the title afforded by an old, yellow, worm-eaten parchment, while they were also blinded by their hatred for the Minister who opposed them. The secret of success, by renouncing the establishment of a right at the right time and in the right way, is only known to few. Europe could do nothing against a campaign in favor of the London protocol, and Austria was forced to take part in the war, since she could not allow Prussia to act alone in the affairs of Germany. In this way Bismarck obtained the duchies by right of conquest, and Denmark provoked a war with the two great German powers by her breach of the agreement.

Bismarck himself appears to regard this manœuvre and his subsequent action upon it as his most important achievement. One evening in the autumn of 1877 we sat together over the fire in the billiard-room at Varzin, discussing the issue of the war with France, and the Chancellor said: "When I was made a prince, the King wished me to take the arms of Alsace and Lorraine. But I would rather have had the arms of Schleswig-Holstein, for that is the diplomatic campaign of which I am most proud." The Legationsrath von Holstein, who was also present, asked whether he had intended to acquire it from the first. "Yes," replied the Prince, "directly after the death of the King of Denmark. But it was hard to accomplish. Everything was against me—Austria, the small states of Germany, the ladies of our court, the liberals, the English—all the world, as is well known. Napoleon did not oppose; he thought he thereby placed us under obligation. Even the King for a long while would not hear of it. We held a council of state at the time, at which I fired off the longest speech I had ever made, and repeated to my hearers things which must have appeared to them extravagant and impossible." He went on to give the substance of his speech (which, however, I will not repeat), and then continued: "To judge from their astonished air, they really supposed that I had taken too much wine at breakfast. Costenoble drew up the protocol, and, on looking at it, I found that the passages on which I had laid most stress were omitted, and it was on these that I chiefly relied. I remarked upon it to him. He said that I was right, but he thought that I should be

pleased to have them kept out of sight. I replied : ' By no means. You certainly thought that I had been drinking, but I insist that the words shall stand as I spoke them.' "

" We will trample down with an iron heel all which is opposed to the restoration of the German nation in its splendor and power," the Chancellor once exclaimed in the Reichstag. But, as soon as the victory was won, he always advised that it should be used with discretion, and in a moderate and conciliatory spirit. That in 1866, in view of a reconciliation that was effected in 1879, Austria lost none of her territory ; that the kingdom of Saxony was preserved, and that the south German states were not at that time obliged to surrender anything to victorious Prussia—this they owed to Bismarck. It was not always easy to carry out his moderate views, and on other questions all his energy was required, as, for instance, in 1863, when the Fürstentag of Frankfort wished for the reconstruction of Germany under the house of Hapsburg. At Nicolsburg his royal master wished that every conquered state should surrender some territory ; that Austria should cede part of north Bohemia and her Silesian possessions ; that Saxony should give up Lausitz on strategic grounds ; and that Bavaria should be deprived of the broad strip which includes Ansbach and Bai-reuth, since these had belonged to his Majesty's ancestors. And in this and other cases the cession was to be a punishment. But Bismarck declared this to be contrary to good policy, and that in such cases the matter must be left to the justice of God. In political decisions the only criterion was, *Cui bono?* and no sentimental claim should be made for what we did not really require. In certain cases we might seize all, but, if not, we ought to seize nothing.

The Chancellor related at Varzin the following characteristic episode relating to the same period : " At the council of war held in my room at Nicolsburg, others were in favor of carrying on the campaign into Hungary, but I was opposed to it. I felt that we had the cholera against us, the Hungarian steppes and marshes, the complete change of front, political considerations, etc. The rest persisted, and I spoke once against the scheme in vain. I then went out of the sitting-room into my bedchamber, which was only divided from it by a wooden partition, and I threw myself upon the bed, and cried aloud in my nervous excitement. After a while silence reigned in the next room, and the matter rested there." The Minister, also, came near to having a fit of crying during that momen-

tous discussion at Baden-Baden to which King John of Saxony and his evil genius Beust came from Frankfort to visit King William, and induced him to decide at the last moment to obey the Emperor Francis Joseph's summons to the assembly of princes, and thus in a certain sense to mediatize himself. Bismarck was almost beside himself from the excitement with which he had opposed the King's resolution, and, when his efforts were at last successful and he was able to withdraw without anxiety, he was seized with convulsions, so that in shutting the door he wrenched out the latch. His aide-de-camp in the anteroom anxiously inquired the reason why he was so pale and agitated.

When the war of 1866 became a certainty and the Prussian Liberals declared themselves to be decidedly opposed to it, a furious attack was made on the Minister by a noted Berlin newspaper. Bismarck, to whom this was not a matter of indifference, sought an interview with the editor, and it took place, but without result. "I see, my dear Doctor," the Count said in conclusion, "that we shall not come to any understanding. You will continue to attack me, and I shall not change my course. But, if you knew what a struggle it has cost me to convince his Majesty that we must fight, you would understand that I only obey the law of necessity. In another half year I will ask you which of us is right." Before the half year had elapsed, they met in the street; the Minister gave the Doctor his hand, and his large gray eyes silently demanded, "What now?" The editor now understood him, pressed the Count's hand, and nodded.

The Chancellor was as forbearing as possible toward the jealousy with which the smaller states of the empire attempted to assert their prerogatives. For instance, he declared himself indifferent whether they carried on the farce of sending embassies to foreign courts or not. He once said, when drinking tea at Rheims, that "it was a mistake to suppose there was danger in keeping up the diplomatic representatives along with those of the Bund. Even if the states were powerful, it would be easy for them to exchange letters at foreign courts, and to intrigue against us by word of mouth, without the aid of official representatives. A dentist, or some such person, would suffice for the purpose." At Versailles, on the admission of Bavaria into the new empire, he willingly agreed to the request of King Louis that he should retain certain special rights. The national zealots severely condemned him for this concession, but they did not understand that the matter was

pressing, and in their zeal overlooked the fact that the Bavarians were not conquered enemies but allies. In the last cabinet crisis (April, 1880) the current report that he purposed to introduce a change in the constitution which would restrict the privileges of some of the allied states was an invention of the newspapers. "Nothing was further from my intention," he said to me on this occasion, "the constitution of the Bund needs no change as long as the rights which it concedes to individual states continue to be used with moderation."

While Bismarck is forbearing wherever it is possible, he never shrinks from taking what is necessary, and he then acts with startling promptitude. In the summer of 1870 the hope of conquest was far more widely diffused through Germany than the fear of defeat. But at first the barren sentiment was equally prevalent that any one who spoke of the acquisition of territory which would give us a better western frontier was a visionary. It would only make France into our perpetual enemy, and it would be useless to incorporate Alsace-Lorraine, since the inhabitants wished to have nothing to do with us. Then followed the two declarations of September to the representatives near the neutral powers—the first from Rheims, on the 13th, the second from Meaux, on the 16th—both issued soon after we had crossed the French frontier, which were acceptable to public opinion in Germany in their general tenor. No prouder words had ever been spoken in the name of the German people, yet it was not the pride of exaltation which was expressed in those documents, but that of duty—the sober judgment which does not flinch from the truth, and draws aside the inmost veil which conceals the meaning of things.

MORITZ BUSCH.